Master of Science in Strategic Brand Communication

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This Master of Science in Strategic Brand Communication (MS SBC) degree is an online program jointly sponsored by the Charles H. Sandage Department of Advertising in the College of Media and the Department of Business Administration in the Gies College of Business. The degree program launched in December 2016 and graduates from this program receive the MS SBC degree awarded by the Graduate College. Strategic Brand Communication (SBC) is a data-driven, purposeful conversation with a brand’s stakeholders. SBC combines traditional advertising practices with contemporary business thinking that pertains to delivering consistent, meaningful messages to consumers. In so doing, SBC seeks to integrate multiple consumer contact points that occur through the purchase of commercial messages in paid, earned, and owned media to deliver persuasive and impactful statements about brands and companies.

This management process integrates all aspects of strategic brand marketing communications such as advertising, public relations, digital media, social media, promotion, and revenue development marketing. Such integration impacts a firm’s business-to-business, marketing channel, customer-focused, and strategic integrated communications.

The MS SBC degree program is designed for working professionals. The proposed online program is designed to be completed in 15 months. The curriculum will prepare students to: be strategic leaders in an ever-changing global media environment; be analytic and integrative thinkers; be effective brand communicators and managers; respond agilely to new technologies, emerging media, new demographics, and market trends; be team-oriented in their approach to management and communications; and be prepared to continue to learn as the media environment evolves.

To be admitted into this program, applicants are expected to have a minimum grade point average of at least 3.0 (A = 4.00) for the last two years of undergraduate study and a 3.0 for any previous graduate work completed. All applicants whose native language is not English must submit a minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of at least 102 (iBT), 253 (CBT), or 610 (PBT); or minimum International English Language Testing System (IELTS) academic exam scores of 6.5 overall and 6.0 in all subsections. Prerequisite: course in Statistics or Calculus from an accredited institution. The admissions criteria will be based upon an evaluation of each applicant’s academic and professional experience, GPA, English aptitude, and letters of recommendation.

A minimum GPA of 2.75 is required for continued enrollment.

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1 For additional details and requirements refer to the department’s program information online and the Graduate College Handbook (http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook).

SBC Class Schedule (https://courses.illinois.edu/schedule/DEFAULT/SBC)

Courses

SBC 500 Strategic Brand Communication Essentials credit: 2 Hours.
This course provides an overview of marketing and brand management: consumer analysis; brand positioning, integration, metrics and value. 2 graduate hours. No professional credit. Prerequisite: Restricted to MS: SBC students.

SBC 501 Strategic Branding: Global Perspectives credit: 2 Hours.
Within the context of globalization, the course underscores the importance of understanding consumers’ values, attitudes, and behaviors for effective product positioning, brand value and effective marketing communications across boarders. Focus on consumer behavior and brand positioning across local, regional, and global contexts. This course is designed to provide students with an advanced understanding of consumer behavior in a global context. 2 graduate hours. No professional credit. Prerequisite: Restricted to MS SBC students.

SBC 502 Essentials of Business Management credit: 3 Hours.
This course provides an understanding of theoretical and historical perspectives on business and capitalism. Covers basic principles of business strategy; understanding of financial accounting and budgeting; the importance of ethics; principles of leadership; and the importance of the global business environment. 3 graduate hours. No professional credit. Approved for Letter and S/U grading. Prerequisite: Restricted to MS: SBC Students.

SBC 503 Consumer Insights I credit: 3 Hours.
The course explores how cultural, sociological and psychological factors shape consumer behavior. It will provide an overview of the key concepts of the discipline of consumer behavior and enable students to put into practice the new found understanding of consumer behavior to shape branding strategies. 3 graduate hours. No professional credit. Approved for Letter and S/U grading. Prerequisite: Restricted to MS: SBC students.
SBC 504  Managing Projects & Teams  credit: 3 Hours.
Successful Strategic Brand Communication requires working on a series of projects. This course provides a socio-technical perspective to the management of projects. The technical dimensions deal with needs analysis, work breakdown, scheduling, resource allocation, risk management, and performance tracking and evaluation - within the allocated time frame and cost. The sociocultural dimensions include attributes of sound leadership, formation and management of teams, and managing customer expectations in order to formulate consistent, integrated campaigns across channels. 3 graduate hours. No professional credit. Approved for Letter and S/U grading. Prerequisite: Restricted to MS: SBC students.

SBC 505  Consumer Insights II  credit: 3 Hours.
The course will provide an overview of the key qualitative methods used to gain strategic insights into consumer behavior and to provide practice in planning research projects, data collection, and analysis. 3 graduate hours. No professional credit. Approved for Letter and S/U grading. Prerequisite: Restricted to MS: SBC students.

SBC 506  Measurement and Evaluation  credit: 3 Hours.
This course will focus on the method and analysis for consumer insights but also for measuring effectiveness of various promotional strategies and campaign effectiveness. This includes an overview of quantitative research methods with emphasis on analysis and interpretation of data, and application to evaluating effectiveness of promotional strategies. 3 graduate hours. No professional credit.

SBC 507  Promotional Strategy  credit: 3 Hours.
This course will familiarize students with the topic of marketing communications and promotion management, and will teach students the steps for strategically planning a strategic brand communications campaign. The culmination of this course will be a campaign for a real-world client. 3 graduate hours. No professional credit.

SBC 508  Messaging Strategy  credit: 3 Hours.
Creating and executing successful messages across communication channels. Explores the development of persuasive messaging through theories of persuasion, consumer-information processing and theories of creativity. The course examines the relationship between creative strategy and creative executions while allowing students to practice creating content for traditional and non-traditional media. Strategic brand communication manages every message and contact point within an organization. Audiences include not only consumers, but employees, stockholders, the media, and others. 3 graduate hours. No professional credit. Prerequisite: SBC 507.

SBC 509  Strategic Media Management  credit: 3 Hours.
Analyzes the markets served by various advertising media and factors to consider in the selection and evaluation of media. Markets include investors, employees, and consumer segments. This course will also cover managing media in a global context. This course is designed to provide students with an advanced understanding of media analysis, planning, buying and optimization. 3 graduate hours. No professional credit. Prerequisite: SBC 502, SBC 507. Restricted to MS: SBC students.

SBC 511  Strategic Analytics & Data Visual  credit: 2 Hours.
This course will prepare students to utilize data for targeting and building customer and brand relationships, with an emphasis on new and emerging media. The students will get exposure to principles of working with structured data using relational databases and data warehouses. They will understand how to work with unstructured data from the web. The will also get exposure to select data mining methods relevant to data commonly worked on by marketing and communication executives and apply these concepts with cases/exercises during each of these modules. 2 graduate hours. No professional credit. Approved for Letter and S/U grading. Prerequisite: Restricted to MS: SBC student.

SBC 512  Professional SBC Capstone Project  credit: 2 Hours.
This course serves as a capstone, requiring the student to demonstrate a mastery of knowledge in the primary areas of Strategic Brand Communication. The project is designed to allow the student to demonstrate his/her mastery of strategic brand communication, focused on Creating and Executing a Research Plan; Repositioning Analysis and Strategy; Strategic Brand Communication Strategy & Tactics; Media Strategy & Tactics; Campaign Monitoring and Evaluation. 2 graduate hours. No professional credit. Prerequisite: SBC 511. Restricted to MS: SBC students.